

# what's up?

## unintentional injuries

### INFORMATION FOR ADULTS WHO CARE ABOUT TEENS

#### What's it all about?

Unintentional injuries are “accidents” that happen without any intent of harm. Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death among children between ages 1 and 19 in the U.S. These kinds of injuries are caused by behaviors such as not wearing a seatbelt, not wearing a helmet on a bike or motorcycle, drinking and driving, riding with a drunk driver and not using protective gear during athletic activity.

Teens suffering from unintentional injuries will lose time at school, in sports and other activities and may even suffer premature death.

#### Why does it matter?

- Possibly as many as 90% of unintentional injuries can be prevented.
- Adolescents use seat belts less frequently than other age groups. 11% of Washington teens rarely or never wear seatbelts.
- Washington girls are more likely than boys to wear seat belts.
- 28% of Washington teens that rode a motorcycle in the past year reported that they rarely or never wore a helmet.
- 95% of pool diving injuries nationally occur in 5 feet of water or less.
- Nationwide, alcohol was involved in 40% of adolescent drownings.
- Wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85%.

#### What are the details?

- Youth in grades 9 through 12 in Washington state report more positive safety behaviors than the national average. Yet since 1990, between 100 and 200 teens ages 15–19 in this state have died each year from unintentional injuries.
- Nationally, unintentional injuries caused 60% of adolescent injury deaths.
- 15–19-year-old males are 2.5 times more likely than females of the same age group to die from an unintentional injury.

#### Causes

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens and young adults.
- Three-quarters of the deaths of 15–19-year-olds in Washington are from motor vehicle crashes.
- In 1999, 29% of Washington adolescents reported that in the last month they had been a passenger in the car of a driver who had been drinking, and 13% reported that they had driven after drinking.
- American adolescents are especially at risk for fatal crashes at night. About 20% of driving by U.S. teens is at night, yet 50% of fatalities are at night.
- Nationally, males are 11 times more likely to drown than females.
- Kids younger than 16 years old accounted for 30% of bike-related deaths in the U.S. in 1998.
- Of the 74% of Washington teens who reported riding a bicycle in the past year, 69% rarely or never wore a helmet.

## UNINTENTIONAL INJURIES INFORMATION FOR ADULTS WHO CARE ABOUT TEENS

### What can I do?

Steps to protect teens may seem obvious, but how do we get adolescents to consistently use these safety measures?

Teens base their choices to wear a helmet, a seatbelt or not to drink and drive on many different influences. Teens may make these decisions without thinking or knowing why. Adults can help teens make more informed and thoughtful decisions about the risks that they take. The following are some helpful tips.

- Teach and motivate teens to choose safe behaviors to protect themselves ... for example, to use seatbelts.
- Recognize and praise teens for taking preventive measures and using good judgment.
- Make agreements with teens to follow a particular plan of action if they find themselves in potentially dangerous situations. Be careful not to punish teens for being in those situations when they do need to call on you.
- Be a good role model for thinking about risks, making informed decisions and practicing safe behaviors.
- Always wear your bike helmet, buckle up in the car and never drink and drive.

### In your community

- Create safer environments, such as the fences around pools, or properly stored weapons.
- Make sure teens have many safe, enjoyable activities to choose from.

### What helps teens avoid injury?

- Wearing bicycle and motorcycle helmets
- Wearing seatbelts
- Knowing how to get help in emergencies
- Knowing and using water safety rules to prevent drowning or near drowning and brain injury by impact
- Knowing rules of the road when driving, walking or biking
- Taking precautions against sports and recreational injuries
- Restricting access to weapons and ammunition and teaching safety rules to follow with guns and other weapons
- Understanding that alcohol and other substances impair one's judgment and may contribute to the likelihood of injuries and even death.



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links!**

#### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control—[www.cdc.gov/ncipc/ncipchm.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/ncipchm.htm)  
Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States (1995)—[www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/MMWRFile/ss4504.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/MMWRFile/ss4504.htm)

#### National Safe Kids Campaign

Fact sheets on different activities and types/causes of injuries—[www.safekids.org/fact.html](http://www.safekids.org/fact.html)

#### The Safe America Foundation

A site devoted to injury prevention for adults and kids—[www.safeamerica.org/](http://www.safeamerica.org/)

#### Think First

Spinal cord injury prevention—[www.thinkfirst.org/news/facts.html](http://www.thinkfirst.org/news/facts.html)

#### Bike Helmet Safety Institute

[www.bhsi.org](http://www.bhsi.org)

#### American Medical Association

Recommendations for Physicians and Other Health Professionals: Guidelines for Adolescent Preventive Services (GAPS)—[www.ama-assn.org/adolhlth/recomend/recomend.htm](http://www.ama-assn.org/adolhlth/recomend/recomend.htm)

#### The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

The Future of Children

Child Indicators: Unintentional Injuries. Volume 10 • Number 1, Spring/Summer 2000—[www.futureofchildren.org/uic/24contents.htm](http://www.futureofchildren.org/uic/24contents.htm)

Washington State Department of Health Washington State Youth Risk Behavior Survey 1999—[www.doh.wa.gov/publicat/publications.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/publicat/publications.htm)

Washington State Department of Health  
DOH Pub 910-123 11/2000

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